

Chapter 7. POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the policy research completed by the Technical Advisory Committee and articulated in the preceding chapter, the following policies and recommendations have been adopted for the *SCORP 2000*. Six major themes emerged from the policy research and have been developed into the six policy areas for the new SCORP.

Resource Protection, Stewardship, Restoration and Enhancement

POLICY: Protect Massachusetts' natural resources and their ecosystem context by maintaining connectedness of open spaces in each watershed. Achieve protection through fee simple and less-than-fee measures to maximize public-private partnerships in the protection of open space lands. Strive to prevent damage from development activities and promote principles of good stewardship among all users.

Recommendations

To implement this policy, appropriate government agencies, representative bodies, nonprofit organizations and individuals should consider the following:

- ⇒ Emphasize biological diversity, watershed and ecosystem protection in natural resource planning and open space protection.
- ⇒ Implement a watershed approach to open space and natural resource planning that emphasizes biological conservation and ecosystem protection and maximizes public and private partnerships to achieve protection goals.
- ⇒ Complete ecological assessments for each of the state's 27 watersheds to identify sensitive natural resources, and the lands that buffer and connect these resources; set protection priorities based on build-out analyses, degree of threat, and conservation value.
- ⇒ Continue to find effective and innovative methods to protect an additional 200,000 acres of open space and restore 2,000 acres of wetlands by 2008.
- ⇒ Develop, publicize and maintain a statewide natural resource inventory and open space management plan for all EOEA open space lands.
- ⇒ Encourage and provide funding for municipal Open Space and Recreation Plans that are cooperative planning efforts from multiple communities and set protection priorities on a watershed basis.
- ⇒ Develop and publish site-specific guidelines on recreation use that permit only those recreation activities that can be accommodated without diminishing the quality of the resource.
- ⇒ Promote planning efforts and projects that incorporate use of GIS and provide GIS training to encourage more sophisticated understanding and use of GIS capabilities.
- ⇒ Encourage responsible use among recreation users by including information on principles of good stewardship and user policies in all educational and promotional literature.
- ⇒ Encourage development that protects and enhances open space systems through public benefit measures such as permanently protecting a portion of the site and open space.
- ⇒ Publish stewardship principles and policies in all recreation literature, including maps and brochures.
- ⇒ Require the assessment of impacts to designated state or local Scenic Rivers as part of the MEPA review process.
- ⇒ Evaluate the impacts of non-shellfishing recreation users on shellfish resources and encourage facilities and programs aimed at reducing pollution from recreation activities, thereby reducing impacts on shellfish beds.
- ⇒ Assess the effectiveness of current streamflow guidelines for protection of current and potential habitat and recreation water uses.
- ⇒ Establish new guidelines to protect in-stream uses.
- ⇒ Minimize impacts of state and municipal facilities or actions on scenic rivers and maximize protection efforts.
- ⇒ Increase understanding of the importance of wetland systems through education programs and discourage projects that fail to consider the wetlands system comprehensively.
- ⇒ Support the Watershed Initiative by encouraging projects that demonstrate consideration of natural resources and wetlands protection.

- ⇒ Complete and continue to enhance wetlands mapping from orthophotography under the DEP Wetlands Conservancy Project.
- ⇒ Enact legislation that encourages or requires inclusion of open space protection in local land use decision-making.
- ⇒ Strengthen the role of the 13 regional planning agencies in local land use, open space, transportation and other planning efforts.
- ⇒ Promote DEM's Creating Greenways: A Citizen's Guide as well as local greenway and trail guides which include an inventory of those greenways and trails already in existence and a vision for future greenways.
- ⇒ Encourage protection and/or retention of "ancient ways" through an emphasis on their cultural and historic values.
- ⇒ Incorporate greenway and trail systems into land use and transportation plans at the state, regional and local level.
- ⇒ Develop statewide guidance information on road abandonment and encourage cities and towns to review road abandonment procedures and work with transportation agencies to review rail line abandonment, including assessment of trail suitability and retention of public access.
- ⇒ Develop programs that integrate the protection of historic resources into all management decisions by public agencies.
- ⇒ Complete identification of historic and archaeological resources under public agency ownership and develop the necessary documentation and research to list these resources on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Education and Information

POLICY: Promote environmental literacy among Massachusetts' citizens, especially about the importance of protecting open space for biological diversity, ecosystem health, and human health and well-being, and support programs in environmental education.

Recommendations

To implement this policy, appropriate government agencies, representative bodies, nonprofit organizations and individuals should consider the following:

- ⇒ Incorporate into education programs the concepts of a.) biodiversity, b.) watershed protection, and c.) ecosystem integrity, and the importance of open space protection to each of these three ecological goals.
- ⇒ Develop a comprehensive study of the economic contributions, both direct and indirect, of open space protection and recreation opportunity and make the results available to public and private agencies to support environmental protection efforts.
- ⇒ Engage in cooperative efforts with school groups, user groups, nonprofit organizations and other educational interests to provide opportunities for all children to experience and learn about Massachusetts' public open space and resources by designing and conducting educational programs in stewardship and resource protection at public recreation and open space sites.
- ⇒ Promote enhanced and expanded interpretive and information programs at all public recreation areas and support similar programs at private recreation areas.
- ⇒ Develop long-term partnerships with research centers and institutions of higher education to promote research related to the understanding, preservation and interpretation of Massachusetts' natural, historic, archaeological and cultural resources.
- ⇒ Develop outreach programs targeted to youth through urban school systems to illustrate career opportunities in natural resource and recreation management.
- ⇒ Provide summer job and internship opportunities for urban youth with real opportunities for building skills and developing an appreciation of natural resources.
- ⇒ Fully integrate heritage tourism into statewide efforts to promote and enhance outdoor recreation and tourism activities. Consider using the State Heritage Park system as heritage tourism and recreation information centers.

- ⇒ Convene professional conferences and workshops to provide technical training to agency personnel, on topics including historic preservation and park and trail maintenance, and to improve public understanding of natural, cultural and historic resource significance and availability.
- ⇒ Develop educational materials, including informational brochures and interpretive signs, on the natural, cultural and historic significance of all state parks, historic sites and other recreation facilities.

Partnerships

POLICY: Develop productive partnerships between state agencies, the Federal government, municipalities and the private sector for acquisition, maintenance, and programming of open space and recreation resources.

Recommendations

To implement this policy, appropriate government agencies, representative bodies, nonprofit organizations and individuals should consider the following:

- ⇒ Maximize state, municipal and nonprofit agency cooperation in the protection of ecologically important lands that are connected to maintain ecosystem integrity.
- ⇒ Improve state and local outreach to constituencies, including user groups and friends groups and encourage direct involvement in resource research, maintenance and advocacy.
- ⇒ Promote partnerships with private development interests, land trusts and others as alternative means of protecting open space.
- ⇒ Utilize Watershed Teams to coordinate partnerships in open space protection, maintenance and programming.
- ⇒ Create councils of sports leagues and sporting groups to promote cooperation among different sports enthusiasts, prevent user conflicts and protect the resource.
- ⇒ Promote partnerships between public and private water suppliers and recreation user groups to study the effects of increased recreation use on public drinking water supply lands and open and expand access at sites that can support it.

Funding

POLICY: Support increased funding for open space and recreation planning, land acquisition, and facility maintenance and develop and promote alternative funding measures when public funds are unavailable. Prioritize funding land acquisition that emphasizes biological conservation and ecosystem protection.

Recommendations

To implement this policy, appropriate government agencies, representative bodies, nonprofit organizations and individuals should consider the following.

- ⇒ Promote local adoption of the Community Preservation Act .
- ⇒ Complete comprehensive planning that includes ecological assessment, watershed protection, open space protection and quality outdoor recreation opportunities.
- ⇒ Continue to support and bring to passage the next Open Space Bond Bill and enabling legislation for local open space revenue generation.
- ⇒ Support less-than-fee acquisition strategies such as conservation restrictions.
- ⇒ Consider alternative funding sources such as dedicated user and licenses fees, tax credits, recreation sales taxes, excise taxes or tax check-offs to fund open space and outdoor recreation initiatives.
- ⇒ Increase appropriation of funds for state grant programs such as the Self-Help and Urban Self-Help, advocate for increased federal funding for the LWCF and UPARR (Urban Park and Recreation Recovery) programs, and provide current information about foundation and corporate funding sources.
- ⇒ Continue to provide state funding for projects that promote partnerships among agencies, between agencies and private organizations, and between state agencies and municipalities in land acquisition, maintenance and programming.

- ⇒ Expand EOEa's Self-Help and Urban Self-Help Programs to make private nonprofit organizations eligible grant recipients.
- ⇒ Improve availability, accessibility, and awareness of funding assistance for acquisition, protection, and restoration of natural, historic and cultural resources.
- ⇒ Improve citizen access to the application and decision-making for federal TEA 21 funds in Massachusetts and provide training sessions on procedures and requirements for obtaining federal TEA 21 funding.
- ⇒ Provide state agencies with consistent yearly funding to allow agencies to plan long-term acquisition, maintenance and programming strategies and eliminate wasteful year-end spending practices. Consider allowing state agencies to retain a portion of revenues such as fees collected at public properties.
- ⇒ Support and expand the DFWELE Riverways Grants program, the DEM Clean Lakes Grants, the DEM Greenways Grants program, DEP Wetlands Conservancy mapping and EOEa Wetlands Restoration Program.
- ⇒ Assess and improve state policy on wastewater treatment grants and loans to favor watershed protection and protection of lands with high recreation value.
- ⇒ Provide funding and develop programs to support GIS development at the local and regional levels, and encourage data development and efficient data exchanges between state, regional and local

Access

POLICY: Promote improved access for the general public to open space and recreation resources throughout the Commonwealth.

entities.

Recommendations

To implement this policy, appropriate government agencies, representative bodies, nonprofit organizations and individuals should consider the following.

- ⇒ Publicize existing incentives available to private landowners to allow public access on private lands including the Chapter 61, 61A and 61B properties, Forest Stewardship Program properties; encourage the donation or sale of conservation restrictions or access easements; and educate local assessors offices about taxation policies of these programs to ensure assessors honor the intent of the programs.
- ⇒ Produce and distribute comprehensive guides to existing open space and recreation resources, that include information on the policies in effect at the site, and appropriate stewardship for visitors.
- ⇒ Strengthen the role of the DFWELE Public Access Board (PAB), update and distribute their publication, Public Access to the Waters of Massachusetts, and, along with other agencies, develop similar publications for land resources.
- ⇒ Complete a comprehensive River Access Guide to the state's 27 major watersheds.
- ⇒ Provide access to open space, recreation, and historic properties and sites in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- ⇒ Build cooperative programs to improve public identification of, and access to, open space and recreation sites through a program that integrates signage, maps and literature, guide books and online computer database systems.
- ⇒ Require public agencies, and encourage the private sector, to ensure public safety on public and private lands by hiring sufficient staff, conducting regular patrols, and posting any rules, regulations and warnings.
- ⇒ Develop and sponsor workshops and distribute written material to educate private landowners about issues involving public recreation use of private lands.
- ⇒ Work with transportation agencies to improve public transportation to open space and recreation sites, paying particular attention to linking urban centers with suburban and rural resource areas.
- ⇒ Implement design, programming and education initiatives to encourage universal access, including bilingual signage policy.
- ⇒ Develop partnerships with private transportation companies to provide access to open space and recreation sites outside of urban areas when public transportation agencies are unable to improve access.

- ⇒ Improve public access to Massachusetts' coastal areas through support of the CZM access programs, DEM Sea Path program, DEP waterways regulations affecting access, and continued land acquisition efforts.
- ⇒ Encourage utilities (water, sewer, electrical, pipeline, communication and railroads) to support or provide public access to their right-of-way corridors.

Maintenance

POLICY: Ensure proper maintenance of all open space and recreation resources and encourage innovative ways of funding maintenance budgets.

Recommendations

To implement this policy, appropriate government agencies, representative bodies, nonprofit organizations and individuals should consider the following.

- ⇒ Encourage productive partnerships with volunteer organizations, such as adopt-a-trail, friends groups, youth groups, corrections workers, etc.; sponsor maintenance training workshops for volunteer organizations and agency staff and develop a handbook of construction and maintenance standards to assist state agencies with maintenance programs.
- ⇒ Consider alternative methods of financing maintenance budgets such as creating maintenance endowments for each new acquisition.
- ⇒ Support and expand DEM's Historic Landscape Preservation Program and develop parallel partnership programs in other agencies as well as partnerships in historic property maintenance and interpretation, where appropriate.